**Chapter 6 Using listening to tap into creative problem solving**

Let’s pick up on the idea of collaborative problem solving with an additional thought about the power of really good listening from Otto Scharmer[[1]](#footnote-1) who introduces the idea of ‘generative listening’ to the process:

The first of these levels, says Scharmer, ‘downloading’ is the most superficial level of listening. Nothing new can emerge from this response, since you are merely reconfirming your habitual ideas, judgements and perceptions. Although you may be giving the expected ‘back-channelling’ responses – ‘yeah, right, OK uh huh, mmm, yep’, etc. – the listening remains at a superficial level.

Once you start really paying attention, Scharmer suggests, you become aware of information and perspectives that differ from what you already know. In this ‘factual’ mode you switch off your inner voice of judgment and get ready to be surprised by the new - ‘Really? Wow!’

If you then enter into real dialogue of empathic listening, you shift to connect directly with the other person; you forget your own agenda and begin to view from the other’s perspective.

At the most profound level of listening – what Scharmer calls ‘Generative’ (creative) – you have slowed right down to listen intently. You are now quiet and fully present, ready for possibilities that may emerge. Here you are no longer the same person that you were –you have undergone a subtle change and realised more about yourself. You are now in a transformational conversation – a conversation which transforms the listener, the speaker, and their conversation, to offer new and creative possibilities as yet not imagined.

1. Scharmer Otto ‘Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges’ Pub. Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)